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071521Z Jul 05

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 003963

SIPDIS

NOFORN

DIA FOR DIRECTOR VADM JACOBY FROM CHARGE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/23/2025

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: TF FREEDOM AND TF WARRIOR LNO TO
TURKISH MILITARY IN NORTHERN IRAQ

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b), (c), and (d).

[11.](#) (S/NF) Summary: Embassy seeks urgent DIA assistance in filling the position of Liaison Officer to the Turkish Special Forces in Northern Iraq. This position is vital in order to collect intel on the Turks' plans and intentions for Iraq, for crisis management, and for helping us pass real-time, accurate information on developments in northern Iraq to the Turks so that they can base their policies on fact, not fiction. We cannot afford to have our Defense Attache Office fill this billet indefinitely; to do so would endanger the mil-to-mil relationship we have worked so hard to rebuild after 2003. End summary.

[12.](#) (S/NF) Embassy Ankara requests urgent DIA assistance to fill an empty billet of significant importance to U.S. efforts in Iraq. Since 2003, DIA has assigned a liaison officer to serve as the bridge between the northern MNF-I commands--Task Force Freedom (TFF) and Task Force Warrior (TFW)--and the Turkish forces in northern Iraq. Turkey has maintained a 1500-troop presence in northern Iraq, ostensibly to monitor the activities of the Turkish Kurdish separatist group, the PKK. The LNO lives at the Turkish SF Brigade HQ in the border town of Silopi, Turkey, but travels frequently throughout TFF and TFW's AOR. We have identified some Turkey FAOs who would be excellent candidates to fill this position, but their commands have not permitted them to fill the billet.

[13.](#) (S/NF) This position was created as a direct result of the July 4, 2003 incident at Suleimaniyah, where U.S. forces detained Turkish SF who were planning to assassinate the mayor of Kirkuk and a Turkman politician. This incident--in which Turkish soldiers were shown in the press bound and bagged as they were transported to Baghdad--caused a huge rift in U.S.-Turkish relations, especially on the mil-to-mil side, from which both sides are still recovering. The primary mission of the LNO, therefore, is to collect as much information as possible on the plans and intentions of the Turkish SF in order to head off such incidents in the future. The two main incumbents in the position have been Turkey FAOs who have used their language skills to great effect, building trust with the SF up to and including the one-star commander. It is vital that we maintain this position so we can continue to keep an eye on our (sometimes difficult) ally.

[14.](#) (S/NF) It has proven effective to have the LNO move freely between Iraq and Turkey. He frequently visits the TU SF outposts in northern Iraq, building relationships but also tacitly reminding the Turks that we are keeping an eye on their movements. In 2004, the Turks neglected to inform us that they had moved some small regular army units just inside the Iraqi border to watch for PKK infiltrators. Our LNO discovered this by spotting the outpost and politely--but insistently--demanded access. This incident embarrassed the Turks into "remembering" to inform us of all/all their deployments in Iraq.

[15.](#) (S/NF) But the LNO's mission goes well beyond collection. For this Embassy--indeed for the USG's mission to keep the Turks positively engaged with the new Iraq--this LNO position is crucial. First, the LNO has proved indispensable in times of crisis. In December 2004, insurgents in Mosul attacked a convoy of Turkish National Police officers on their way to provide security at the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad. This incident caused a sensation in Turkey: all the country's top leaders attended the officers' funeral. CF engaged the insurgents and collected the dead and wounded. Yet without our LNO, it would have been impossible to provide real-time updates to the GOT on events, coordinate moving the Turkish KIA to the border and the Turkish WIA back home. His actions and information ensured the stories that appeared in the Turkish media implying CF did nothing to help the Turks were effectively countered by GOT officials. The LNO played a similar role in Sept. 2004 in assisting with a U.S. military medivac of a Turkish Red Crescent worker who was seriously wounded in an insurgent attack in Iraq.

[16.](#) (S/NF) Second, the LNO has served as a vital information

link between the Embassy and TFF and TFW. Events in northern Iraq--such as in Kirkuk and the northwest Ninewah province city of Talafar (which has a large Turkmen population)--are of great interest to the Turks. Unfortunately, the Turks' intelligence and press sources in Iraq are poor, and their intel assets often provide them false or highly exaggerated information. This misinformation dominated the front pages of Turkish newspapers during Sept. 2004 coalition counterinsurgency operations in Talafar. The GOT lacked good information and so did the Turkish press, which grossly exaggerated the level of destruction in the city. Events reached a head mid-month when the Turkish Foreign Minister threatened to cease all cooperation with us on Iraq over Talafar. It was only when the LNO was able to get direct, real-time, releasable battle updates from TFF that we were able to calm the GOT.

17. (S/NF) With counterinsurgency operations again in full swing in Talafar--and with the controversy surrounding the future of Kirkuk--the LNO continues to provide us with real-time updates on the situation in northern Iraq. We are able to pass this to the Turkish military and the government, both of which are much better informed and can now make decisions based on accurate information, not overblown press reports. We believe this information flow has been a significant part of the GOT's decidedly more constructive policy toward Iraq in 2005.

18. (S/NF) We want to counter one argument that some may make about the importance of this position, and that is that the Turks themselves have LNOs in Talafar, Kirkuk, and Mosul. They do, but the Turks have proven to be notoriously poor at sharing information outside their direct chain of command. Their LNOs report up to the J3 in TGS, but the information they gain almost never goes to other military staff directorates, and certainly never outside the Turkish military to interested parties, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Not having the U.S. LNO in place will allow the Turks to pass important information only through their narrow funnel, and we will not achieve our aim.

19. (S/NF) When we have experienced staffing gaps for this position, the Embassy's Defense Attache Office has been compelled to send one of its attaches to fill in. This comes at a time when DAO is already spread thin: the Assistant ARMA (a Turkey FAO) is serving a six-month TDY in Afghanistan. We are facing significant gaps between the departing and arriving Navy and Marine Attaches. The DATT is Air Force, and both he and the Asst Air Force Attache carry significant C-12 flight responsibilities in addition to their regular work.

110. (S/NF) For the foreseeable future, post's ARMA will fill the LNO slot. Yet this comes at a time when we are working especially hard to repair the very damage to our mil-to-mil relationship--especially Army-to-Army--caused in part by the Suleimaniyah incident. Beginning last summer, the ARMA's main diplomatic effort has been to restore U.S.-Turkish mil-to-mil relations to a pre 2003 level. ARMA has successfully coordinated a visit by the Turkish Land Forces Commander to last year's CEA, followed by USAREUR Commander GEN Bell's CPV to Turkey. ARMA is currently working a reciprocal CPV by the TLFC to GEN Bell. In addition to all the coordination necessary to put these important counterpart visits into place, there is the potential this fall for a CPV invite from the Turkish TRADOC Commander (GEN Kocman) to the incoming U.S. TRADOC Commander. At this time, we do not know how the ARMA can complete his chief mission here if he must continue to fill in as the LNO.

111. (C/NF) The bottom line for this Embassy is that we simply must fill this billet--soon--if we are to achieve our objectives of keeping the Turks positively engaged in supporting the new Iraq and of furthering U.S.-Turkey mil-to-mil relations.

MCELDOWNEY